

News Items and Public Crime Summary for Week Ending March 20, 2010

Curacao - PDVSA Committed To Still-Down Isla Refinery

The head of Venezuela's state-owned oil company PdVSA, acknowledged Friday there are "many problems" at a 320,000-barrel-a-day refinery it operates on Curacao, but said the company remains committed to it.

The Isla refinery has been completely shut down for nearly two weeks after a power outage caused serious damage to air compressors used at the plant. No restart date has been announced.

PDVSA President Rafael Ramirez, who is also Venezuela's oil minister, said Friday discussions that began last year about PDVSA possibly buying the refinery from its owner, the Curacao government, are ongoing, and he said a deal remains possible. Ramirez's upbeat comments about PDVSA's relationship with the Isla refinery is a partial reversal from last week, when he suggested PDVSA would have to leave the refinery if it were proven the U.S. government has been sending planes on spy missions from Curacao's airport to Venezuela, as the Venezuelan government has alleged.

Ramirez said Friday the issue over spy planes would have to rise to the level of a serious political conflict among the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the U.S. and Venezuela before PDVSA would consider quitting the refinery.

"We have no intention of abandoning the refinery," Ramirez said. "On the contrary, we are committed to it."

The Isla refinery's capacity makes up about 10% of PDVSA's three-million-barrels-a-day refinery network, and Ramirez acknowledged its strategic importance Friday, noting the Curacao port has "deep waters." The depth of the water is important in terms of Venezuela's increasing exports of oil products to China, as those long-distance trips require large ships that cannot be accommodated by ports at some other PDVSA refineries.

Ramirez dismissed some media reports about PDVSA vowing to invest US \$1.5 billion to get the refinery into better working condition, saying it was speculation.

PDVSA began operating the Isla refinery in 1985 and has a lease that runs until 2019. (Various media)

Netherlands – Dissolution Process NA Declared Not Controversial

The outgoing Dutch Parliament has declared the Netherlands Antilles dismantling process non-controversial, thus keeping 10-10-10 a feasible target date.

It is expected that necessary legislation and a Dutch Kingdom Charter amendment could start its process in April in the Netherlands. Curacao and St. Maarten are planning for June 2010, Island Government elections. The Curacao election has an added twist that could cause a delay, because the current coalition does not have the two-thirds majority in the current Island Parliament needed to pass Country Curacao's draft Constitution; meaning that the new elected parliament will have the opportunity to pass the amended Constitution with a simple majority. (Various media)

Curacao\Bonaire – Law Enforcement Investigates Narcotics Operation

Law enforcement officials from various organizations joined forces and raided various residences and boats on Curacao and Bonaire; narcotics were found and various arrests were made. The Public Prosecutor would not comment on the investigation into the drug trade via land and sea between the two islands. (Amigoe)

Curacao - No political marriage between MAN, NPA and FK

Political party MAN leader Charles Cooper said that it is up to the NPA and Forsa Korsou (FK) parties whether they want to cooperate with MAN. Cooper made the statement via the social network site Facebook. His proposition led to furious reactions from various persons, including FK leader Gregory Damoen. Cooper used the analogy of a couple getting acquainted, courting, and finally deciding whether they should get married or not, to explain the developments regarding the Lista di Kambio (LdK) in which the three parties had issued a combined list of candidates for the January federal elections.

In his reaction, FK leader Damoen said that if one party wants to leave LdK, this immediately implies the end of the combined list, “as three minus one equals zero.” He was also very unhappy about the analogy presented by Cooper, saying that such a „marriage” would not lead to integration, but to annexation. Damoen called Cooper’s comparison “a very bad choice” (Amigoe).

Aruba - Negotiations with Petrobras on possible refinery take-over

Finance Minister Mike de Meza (AVP) will negotiate with representatives of Brazilian energy company Petrobras on a possible take-over of the Valero refinery at the end of this month in Brazil. Valero supports the negotiations. De Meza said there are still contacts with Venezuelan PdVSA and that Valero is currently negotiating with the Canadian oil and gas company Pacific Rubiales. PM Mike Eman announced he will consult with the Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs as to how the latter could assist with the negotiations with Petrobras. State-Secretary for Kingdom Relations Ank Bijleveld (CDA) had indicated last January that the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs had contacted Petrobras. The Brazilian oil giant had already expressed interest in the refinery twice in 2008 and 2009 (Amigoe, Extra).

Antilles – Formation Process De Jongh-Elhage 2 Administration Completed

Formateur Pedro Atacho submitted his final report to Netherlands Antilles Governor Frits Goedgedrag. The report contains the governing accord and the names of the “De Jongh-Elhage 2” administration cabinet members and all members of parliament. The second State Secretary of Justice position will stay vacant, because the PNP needs more time to choose a candidate for this position. The new cabinet officials and MPs will be sworn in on March 26, 2010. (Various media)

De Jongh-Elhage 2 Administration:

PAR

Prime Minister - Emily **de Jongh-Elhage**

Minister of Justice - Magali **Jacoba**

Minister of Education, Culture, Health and Social

Development - Omayra **Leeflang**

Minister Plenipotentiary in The Hague - Marcel **Van der Plank**

President of Parliament - Pedro **Atacho**

PNP

Minister of Finance and deputy Prime Minister - Ersilia **de Lannooy**

State Secretary of Justice - Vacancy

UPB

Minister of Economic and Labor Affairs - Elvis **Tsjin A Sjo**

NA

Minister of Constitutional and Internal Affairs - Roland **Duncan**

Minister of Transport and Telecommunications - Patrick **Illidge**

State Secretary of Interior Affairs - Felix **Thomas**

Deputy Minister Plenipotentiary in The Hague - Mavis **Brooks-Salmon**

DP-Statia

State Secretary for Justice responsible for police

and penal institutions in the Windward Islands. - Ernie **Simmons**

WIPM

State Secretary for Constitutional Affairs - Amalia **Nicholson-Linzey**

Netherlands Antilles Parliament:

PAR – Pedro **Atacho** (*President*)

Sedney **Ignacio**

Glenn **Sulvaran**

Malvinia **Cicilia**

Marlon **Jamaloodin**

Eduard **Braam**

PNP – Faroe **Metry**

Lista Di Kambio _ Eunice **Eisden**

Gerrit **Schotte**

Gassan **Dannawi**

Nelson **Pierre**

Gregory **Damoen**

Pueblo Soberano – Helmin **Wiels**

Lia **Willems**

DP Statia – Reginald **Zaandam**

WIPM – Will **Johnson**

SPA, National Alliance – Rodolphe **Samuel**

George **Pantophlet**

Henrietta **Doran-York**

DP Bonaire _ Robbie **Beukenboom**

UPB – Ramoncito **Booi**

James **Kroon**

Curacao – PdVSA Refuses RdK Bullenbay Access

Manuel Medina, Managing Director of the Isla Refinery, operated by Venezuelan State-owned Oil Company PdVSA wrote in a December 16, 2009 letter to Refineria di Korsou (RdK) Director Herbert Mensche that RdK will not be granted access to its oil terminals at Bullenbay. PdVSA has denied RdK access based on the current lease agreement which expires in 2019. (Antilliaans Dagblad)

Curacao – USFOL Reaches Out to The Community With Cookies

On March 4th the U.S. Forward Operating Location in Curacao (USFOL) delivered 100 boxes of Girl Scout Cookies to four organizations on Curacao that care for children. “Girl Scout Cookies are a familiar part of American culture in the US. For more than 80 years, Girl Scouts in the US, with the enthusiastic support of their families, have helped ensure the success of local Girl Scout Cookie activities. From its earliest beginnings to its current popularity, the sale of cookies has helped Girl Scouts have fun, develop valuable life skills and make the world a better place by helping to support Girl Scouting in their communities. In this case, the cookies were purchased by the USFOL and given to the children on the island at the following organizations: Siloam Orphanage and Children’s Hospice (www.siloamvillage.org), Meant to Shine Foundation (www.meanttoshine.org), Hebron Orphanage (www.hebron.nl), and Amigunan di Christo (Fuik Community Center/Email: cesar.eman@pbscuracao.com).

There is nothing like the joy expressed on the faces of children when they receive such a special blessing. “To see them clamoring for their favorite box of cookies and the smiles expressed on every face was worth it all!” said Chaplain, Capt Brad Phillips of the USFOL’s Chapel office. He went on to say, “What the USFOL strives to do in the Curacao community through our Community Relations Program is make a difference in the lives of those in Curacao that are unable to help themselves and in this case it was these children that are so deserving and precious.” Everyone from the USFOL that participated in this outreach was not only impressed with the children but also with the leaders themselves and their life-changing dedication to the young lives in their care. (Various media)

Bonaire – Government Will Not Appeal Referendum Decision

The Bonaire government will not appeal the decision by Netherlands Antilles Governor Frits Goedgedrag that annulled Bonaire’s request to hold a referendum concerning their constitutional future. Goedgedrag ruled that the referendum could inflict disproportionate damage to the interests of the Kingdom partners and conflicts with the International Human Rights Treaty. Also, the referendum contravenes international law by limiting the voting rights of European Dutch nationals. MPs Jopi Abraham and Anthony Nicolaas, two referendum advocates, want the United Nations to judge the decision by Governor Goedgedrag to annul the referendum. (Amigoe)

Antilles – Trafficking in Persons Legislation Process Setback

The Central Committee of the Netherlands Antilles Parliament had scheduled a debate concerning the proposed new trafficking in persons legislation for Monday, 15 March 2010. The legislation was referred back to the Justice Minister, before the debate started, because the draft was not fully in compliance with the proposed new penal code

revision, which is due later this year. The process can only resume after the MoJ makes the necessary compliance changes. A new debate date has not been scheduled.
(Various media)

Curacao – Venezuelan Oil Minister: We Are Not Planning to Relinquish Refinery Control

Venezuela's energy minister says the government of President Hugo Chavez is not planning to give up operational control of the Isla Refinery, operated by Venezuelan State-owned Oil Company PdVSA. Minister Rafael Ramirez says Venezuela hasn't abandoned its commitment to its lease of the Isla refinery which expires in 2019. In January, Chavez warned that his government could reconsider its involvement with the refinery. His comments came after Venezuela protested that Curacao allows U.S. military counter-drug flights to operate from its airstrips. The Isla refinery has suffered a series of recent shutdowns due to power outages. Ramirez said Wednesday he wasn't sure when the refinery's operations would return to normal. (Various media)

Antilles\Aruba - New U.S. Visa Application Form Goes Green

The United States Consulate General in Curacao announced the introduction of the new Consular Electronic Application Center (CEAC) and form DS-160. The new single, internet-based application form DS-160 will be required of all non-immigrant visa applicants seeking a visa for a temporary visit to the United States and has several advantages over the existing application forms. The implementation of the DS-160 will be phased-in during this year, 2010, but applicants are encouraged to start using the new form immediately.

The comprehensive form features online translations and the ability for applicants to upload their own photograph directly onto the application form. Additionally, once completed online, the form is electronically transmitted directly to the Consulate for processing. Applicants then only print the single confirmation page to take with them to their interview – thus saving thousands of pages of paper each month.
(Antilliaans Dagblad)

Kingdom – U.S. Government Sketches Human Rights Condition

The U.S. Government released its Global Human Rights Report 2009 last week. The report aims to provide an accurate, factual record of human rights conditions within the Kingdom. The report described that in Aruba and the Netherlands Antilles, prison conditions remained substandard in some respects and lengthy pretrial detention was a problem, although authorities took a number of measures to reduce it. Trafficking in Persons was a problem in the Netherlands Antilles. At Bon Futuro Prison on Curacao, there were several escapes, and several altercations resulting in injured inmates. Prison guards went on strike in March and September in Curacao over labor conditions. The government of the Netherlands made US \$11.4 million available to the Netherlands Antilles for improving prison and detention facilities.

During the year the Netherlands government deployed prison guards and management staff from the Netherlands to the Bon Futuro Prison in Curacao. The report criticizes the excessive length of pretrial detention and the high number of detainees not convicted of a crime. The report indicates that the government has taken measures to correct this

problem. In the Netherlands Antilles, the St. Maarten court ordered the immediate release of a prisoner whom authorities in 2007 forced to serve seven months of a 10-year sentence sleeping on the concrete floors of unhygienic and overcrowded jail cells in Philipsburg before transferring him to Pointe Blanche Prison.

The report suggests that the five Antillean islands were transit and destination points for the trafficking of men, women, and possibly children for sexual exploitation and domestic servitude, as well as forced labor in the construction and agriculture sectors. According to local observers, the Antillean islands of Curacao and Dutch St. Maarten were destinations for women trafficked for the sex trade from Peru, Brazil, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, and Haiti. Over the course of a year, an estimated 500 foreign women, some of whom had been trafficked, were reportedly involved for part of that time in prostitution. The report listed various groups vulnerable to labor trafficking. These include Haitian men in the agriculture and gardening sectors and Latin American and Caribbean men in construction. Concern continued that debt bondage could be taking place, especially among some Asian migrants in restaurants and local businesses. The report mentioned that authorities monitored the situation closely.

The report does not pass judgment, but gives an overview of the human rights situation in the Kingdom and gives an explanation of steps taken by the Kingdom entities to correct the situation. (Antilliaans Dagblad)

Aruba - Tourists Believe They Found Natalee Holloway's Remains

A Pennsylvania couple believes they may have found Natalee Holloway's skeleton on a vacation to Aruba. Patti and John Muldowney believe underwater photos they took while snorkeling off the coast of Aruba reveal a skeleton on the ocean floor. The photo, taken by John Muldowney of Manheim, Pa., has been turned over to the FBI.

The Intelligencer Journal/Lancaster New Era reported the photo could be a human corpse, and that John Muldowney claims he has a gut feeling it is Natalee Holloway. Natalee Holloway disappeared in Aruba almost five years ago. While there has been much speculation about what happened to Holloway, no one has ever been tried in connection with her disappearance. Suspicion has hovered over Joren van der Sloot, who has twice been arrested in relation to the disappearance. Holloway has never been found.

The FBI has declined to comment on the photo. (Various media)

Curacao – Marijuana Farm Raided; Three Men Arrested

Law enforcement officials in Curaçao raided a marijuana farm at the Sabana Hundu area near Ronde Klip on Wednesday. They confiscated 3,793 plants, other paraphernalia, and a large sum of money. Three men were arrested. (Various media)

CURAÇAO

Crime March 12 – 18

On March 17 a home owner in Ronde Klip was tied up and robbed by three men who had broken into his home (Extra).

Parliamentary commission reports on vehicle theft phenomenon

A Parliamentary commission, established to investigate vehicle thefts submitted its report on March 15. In the past, vehicle theft was categorized as “joyriding”, usually perpetrated by youths who would steal cars and later abandon them. Nowadays, vehicles are stolen for purposes of stripping parts and reselling these through a criminal network. The commission noted that there are clearly established criminal groups on each island of the Netherlands Antilles, which can be divided in local groups which commit the thefts and distribute parts through a local network, and international groups which do the same but on an international level. Within the criminal organization, members perform different functions and closely work together. There are thieves, couriers, strippers, fences, stashers, those who prepare counterfeit documents and those who give the orders as to what type of vehicle to steal. Border control in Curaçao and Bonaire is deemed far better than in St. Maarten, St. Eustatius and Saba. St. Maarten has an open border with French St. Martin, while there is no direct customs control in St. Eustatius and Saba. The commission suggested a structural approach to this phenomenon and improvement of cooperation among the relevant island authorities (Amigoe).

ARUBA

Crime March 12 – 18

On March 15 a pedestrian in Seroe Pela was beaten and robbed by two men. The same night, two elderly persons in De Vuijst were beaten and robbed by two masked men who had broken into their home. On March 16 four youngsters attempted to rob a woman outside her home. When the victim began to scream the suspects fled, but were arrested by police during a subsequent search of the area (Amigoe, Diario Aruba).

ST. MAARTEN

Crackdown on illegal sale of prescription medication

More than a truckload of various prescription medications that were being sold illegally has been confiscated from a number of businesses in a major crackdown by authorities. Stores along the entire Front and Back Streets of Philipsburg as well businesses at Princess Juliana International Airport (PJIA) were searched by health inspectors. Among the drugs confiscated were ulcer medication (used for abortions), antibiotics, hormonal pills, birth control injections, erectile enhancers and painkillers. Health Inspector General Rob Sardeman said that the confiscated drugs will be destroyed. According to the Customs Office, most of the medication sold on the black market in St. Maarten is brought in on airlines as luggage by “passenger-smugglers,” most of whom work on behalf of peddlers. The medication is then distributed to local sellers, a majority of whom are hairdressers, barbers, shop attendants, street vendors, brothel owners or other

persons who run small businesses. The Dominican Republic and Haiti are believed to be two of the main supply sources (Daily Herald).

"The Weekly Press Summary is a compilation of stories running in the Netherlands Antilles and Aruban press that is intended to alert readers about items of interest to them. There is no interpretation or verification of the facts contained therein."